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ABSTRACT

A summary report is presented of the evaluation of the Core French Review conducted in North York schools in Ontario (Canada) during the 1987-88 academic year. A Core French program is one in which French as a second language is taught as a regular subject to students in an English-language school. Since September 1984, students have started Core French in grade 3 and accumulated 600 hours of French instruction by the end of grade 8. Students in grades 3 and 4 receive 20 minutes of daily instruction, and students in grades 5 through 8 receive 40 minutes of daily instruction. The review design covered curriculum documents and student learning materials, program implementation practices, staffing, parental perceptions, program outcomes, and professional development needs. Data collection involved group interviews with 13 Core French teachers and 4 principals, achievement testing of 808 eighth graders in the area of French listening, surveys of and interviews with members of 4 Boards of Education, observation of 72 fifth- and eighth-grade classrooms, individual interviews with 24 teachers, group interviews with 6 parents, and questionnaires administered to 149 teachers and 89 principals. Results and recommendations are provided in each area covered, and are organized into strong points and points needing attention. Thirteen graphs are included. (TJH)

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CORE FRENCH PROGRAM REVIEW :

GRADES 3 - 8

SUMMARY REPORT

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Ruth C. Calman

September 1988

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The system-wide review of the elementary Core French program in North York was made possible through the considerable work of many individuals. Listed below are the members of the various committees as well as individuals and organizations who contributed to the review.

Steering Committee: Responsible for proposal development, review of final report, and development of proposed courses of action.

Marguerite Jackson	Superintendent of Curriculum Services (Chairperson)
Ruth Calman	Research Associate
Pat Crawford	Chief Research and Evaluation Officer
Ian Daniel	Co-ordinator of Modern Languages
Jack Fraumeni	External FSL Consultant, Former North York Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Dick Leclerc	Principal, Don Valley Junior High School
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**Helen Coles	Program Leader, Core French
**Margaret Cameron	Co-ordinator of Special Projects

Planning and Review Committee: Responsible for planning the details of the review process and reviewing subcommittee work.

Marguerite Jackson	Superintendent of Curriculum Services (Chairperson)
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Student Achievement Subcommittee: Responsible for selection/development of student achievement tests.

Claire Piché	Consultant, Modern Languages (Chairperson)
Ruth Calman	Research Associate
Ian Daniel	Co-ordinator of Modern Languages
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* Co-ordinator of Special Projects, 1986-1988
** Additional members who joined the committee in August and September 1988 for its review of the final report and development of proposed courses of action.

Observation Instrument Subcommittee: Responsible for development of the observation instrument and follow-up interview schedule as well as planning of the training session for observers.

Ruth Calman	Research Associate (Chairperson)
Helen Coles	Program Leader, Core French
Ian Daniel	Co-ordinator of Modern Languages
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Howard Hainsworth	Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Toronto
Bea Harper	Program Consultant, Simcoe County Board of Education
Renée Taillefer	FSL Consultant, Formerly of the Ontario Ministry of Education
Joan Veilands	Assistant Co-ordinator of Modern Languages, East York Board of Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

The following is a summary report of the Core French Review carried out in North York schools in the 1987-88 academic year. A detailed account of the review process and findings are available in a separate technical report*.

The North York Elementary Core French Program

A Core French program is one in which French as a Second Language (FSL) is taught as a regular subject to students in an English language school. Prior to 1984, most North York students began their Core French program in Grade 4. Students received 20 minutes per day until Grade 6 and 40 minutes per day in Grades 7 and 8. This programming resulted in students accumulating 420 hours of instruction by the end of Grade 8. In 1984, the starting grade of the Core French program was lowered to Grade 3 and the time allocated for the Grade 5 and Grade 6 programs was increased to 40 minutes in 1986 and 1987 respectively. Thus, as of September 1984, North York students started Core French in Grade 3 and will have accumulated 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8.

North York's recent move toward increasing the amount of time allocated to Core French is consistent with the Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 58, issued in June 1986, which states that:

> To further the equality of educational opportunity across the province, it has been decided that English speaking students will study French in Grades 4 to 8. As of September 1987, students entering Grade 4 must receive French instruction in every year from Grade 4 to 8 and must have accumulated a minimum of 600 hours of French instruction by the end of Grade 8. ... This policy will give Ontario students in English language schools the opportunity to develop a basic command of French, which can be expanded through further study or through contact with French speaking people.

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* The technical report (Calman, R.C. Core French Program Review: Grades 3-8, Technical Report. North York: North York Board of Education, 1988) is available in The F.W. Minkler Library and from Educational Research and Evaluation Services.

The North York Core French program is outlined in detail in the North York Core French guidelines, originally written for Grades 4 to 8 and currently being revised and expanded to accommodate the increased time now allocated for Core French. These documents describe the goals, aims, and objectives of the Core French program and outline appropriate content and activities for the development of language skills and cultural awareness. The basic language texts and North York support materials recommended for use in Core French classes are also stated. The North York guidelines are based on the Ontario Ministry of Education guideline, French, Core Programs 1980, and were intended to be used in conjunction with this document.

Background to the Review

In accordance with a motion adopted by the North York Board of Education on 5 February 1986, a review of French as a Second Language program offerings in North York was conducted under the direction of a committee consisting of Trustees, representatives of parent groups, and Board staff. As part of this review, the committee produced six recommendations pertaining to Core French programs which were approved by the Board on 25 February 1987.

1. that Core French in North York begin in grade 3, with 20 minutes of instruction daily in grades 3 and 4 and 40 minutes daily in grades 5 to 8;

2. that the Director initiate in 1987-88 a major system-wide evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of Core French in North York;

3. that recommendations for the improvement of Core French be developed on the basis of the evaluation, for implementation beginning in September, 1988;

4. that funds be set aside in 1987 preliminary estimates to support the provision of out-of-class communicative experiences for all Core French students;

5. that as vacancies occur in elementary schools preference be given to hiring teachers qualified to teach integrated French;

6. that interested teachers in all panels be given time and encouragement to obtain French as a Second Language qualifications.

Report of the Director's Committee on French as a Second Language Programs (North York Board of Education, 1986)

The decision to conduct a system-wide evaluation of Core French was a timely one. The past five years have witnessed an ever-increasing degree of concern among parents, educators, and second language specialists about the state of the Core French program nation-wide and a National Core French Study is currently being conducted under the auspices of the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT)*. This study, which is currently on-going, has identified a two-fold task: a) mobilization of the experience available across the country in Core French and b) innovation with a view toward strengthening the Core program. The innovative thrust of the National Study is curriculum and CASLT will be investigating, gathering, and creating curriculum resources in four curriculum areas: language, communication activities, culture, and general language education.

The National Study's focus on curriculum is in keeping with North York's own interest in curriculum modification. In 1986, the North York Report of the Director's Committee on French as a Second Language Programs suggested that "students needs can best be met through evaluation and renewal of Core French curriculum..." (p.44). This aim was incorporated into the current Core French Review which sought to obtain information that would help to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program in Grades 3 to 8 and determine how the program could be improved. While it was recognized that an in-depth review of all aspects of the Core French program would not be possible in the time available (September 1987 - June 1988), a rather broad range of questions was nonetheless proposed and addressed. These questions, outlined below, were developed in consultation with a Core French Review Steering Committee including a parent representative and representatives from the Modern Languages Section of Curriculum Services, the North York Principals' Association, the North York Association of School Administrators, central office administrative staff, and Research & Evaluation Services, as well as an external FSL consultant (formerly in the employ of the Board).

Review Questions

Curriculum Documents and Student Learning Materials

1. Do North York curriculum guidelines and teacher resource documents for the Core French program meet teachers' needs?

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* The North York Board of Education is one of two Ontario Boards selected to be part of the Ontario School's Project Committee for the National Core French Study.

2. Are learning materials being used by students in the Core French program appropriate to the age, learning stage, and interests of students in the program?

Program Implementation Practices

3. To what extent is program implementation (i.e. program content, teaching strategies, and evaluation procedures) consistent with Ministry of Education requirements as stated in the Ministry curriculum guideline, French, Core Programs 1980, with the North York Core French Guideline: Part A (1983) and Part B (1984), and with the criteria for an effective Core French program as outlined in Programming in the Primary and Junior Divisions (North York Board of Education, 1981)?

4. How do Core French program implementation procedures in North York compare with procedures being used by other Ontario Boards of Education?

Staffing

5. Are adequate consultative support, supervision, and direction (from consultative staff, principals, supervisory officers, conveners, etc.) available to Core French teachers?

6. What differences, if any, exist between programs being delivered by integrated teachers and programs delivered by itinerant teachers?

7. What are the language skills of Core French teachers?

Parental Perceptions

8. What are parental perceptions of the Core French program?

Program Outcomes

9. To what extent are the stated goals, aims and objectives of the Core French program, as outlined in North York curriculum guidelines, being achieved by students?

Professional Development Needs

10. What are the professional development needs of teachers in the Core French program?

These questions served as the focus of the review and guided the development of the methodology described in the following chapter.

II. METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain the most reliable and valid information about the elementary Core French program, a variety of data-gathering techniques was used. These are described below in chronological order.

Group Interviews for Teachers and Principals

Group interviews were conducted with a small number of teachers and principals in February and March, respectively. The purpose of these interviews was to provide participants with an opportunity to share their views of the Core French program and to identify issues to be included in questionnaires for all Core French teachers and their principals.

Thirteen randomly selected Core French teachers, including integrated, itinerant, and junior high/middle school teachers, attended one of two interview sessions. Teachers discussed a variety of issues including the adequacy of curriculum guidelines and student learning materials, differences in delivery of programs by itinerant and integrated teachers, and professional development needs of Core French teachers.

Four principals attended a separate group interview session and discussed many of the same topics as had been considered by teachers. In addition, principals discussed their own roles in monitoring the Core French program and in supervising Core French teachers.

Student Achievement Testing

In March, 808 Grade 8 students from 32 classes completed a French listening achievement test. This test, composed of 37 items, covered a wide range of objectives and involved students listening to dialogues and passages of varying lengths as well as single sentence questions.

In order to interpret the findings of this test, a group of Grade 8 teachers from the Eastern and Western regions met, prior to a release of results, and conducted an item by item analysis of the test indicating their expectations for student achievement under ideal teaching conditions. The data were used in establishing a system target range of between 74% and 82%. Student performance within this range will be considered to represent acceptable student achievement for purposes of this review.

Surveys and Interviews of Boards of Education

In March, representatives from four Metro area school Boards responded to a brief survey and were individually interviewed to determine the methods of Core French program implementation being used by these Boards.

Classroom Observations and Individual Teacher Interviews

A detailed observation guide was developed by North York staff in consultation with two external FSL specialists as a means of gathering valid and reliable information about classroom practices. The observation guide was based on criteria for an effective Core French program as outlined in North York and Ministry documents and described a range of classroom practices ranging from "unacceptable" to "ideal".

It should be emphasized here that the development of the observation guide involved translation of Ministry and North York criteria into behavioural descriptors. This involved considerable interpretation of terminology and while the guide represents a major achievement insofar as it serves to clarify expectations for classroom practice, the guide was not made available to teachers prior to the review.

In April, 24 North York educators, including Core French teachers, principals, the Superintendent of Curriculum Services, French program leaders, and members of the Modern Languages Section of Curriculum Services, attended a two-day training session for observers along with four external FSL specialists. Observers were provided with a background in French teaching methodology and were trained to record classroom activities in a systematic and objective manner using the observation guide. Observers then visited 72 classrooms in teams of two. Forty-one Grade 5 classes and 31 Grade 8 classes in 67 North York schools were observed. As Figures 1-4 show, sample sizes represented approximately 30% of all classes being taught at these grade levels and more than 50% of teachers teaching at these levels. Classrooms of probationary teachers were not included: probationary teachers were observed and interviewed as part of consultative and screening activities for teachers new to North York.

Each observation was followed by a 35-minute interview with the classroom teacher. An interview schedule guided the discussion and provided the classroom teacher with an opportunity to discuss the lesson which had been observed as well as issues related to student evaluation, cultural objectives, and integration of ESL and exceptional students in Core French classes.

Group Interview for Parents

In April, a group of six parents, including five parents appointed by their local home and school associations and one representative from the North York chapter of Canadian Parents for French, attended a group interview session. They discussed a range of topics including their expectations of the program, their perceptions of the program's strengths and weaknesses, and the adequacy of the information they received about their children's progress in the program and about the Core French program itself.

Figure 1: PERCENTAGE OF GRADE 5 CLASSES OBSERVED

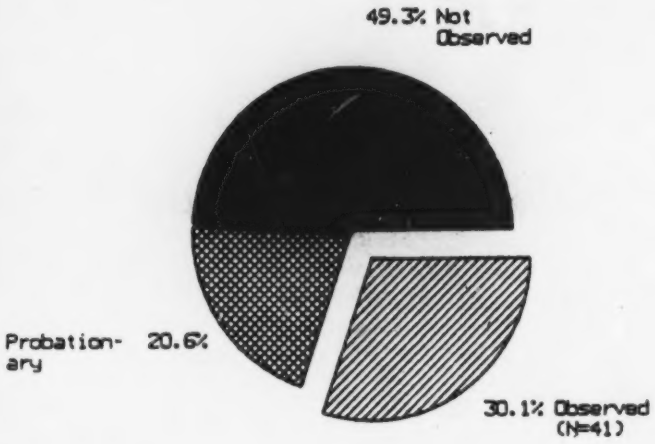


Figure 2: PERCENTAGE OF GRADE 8 CLASSES OBSERVED

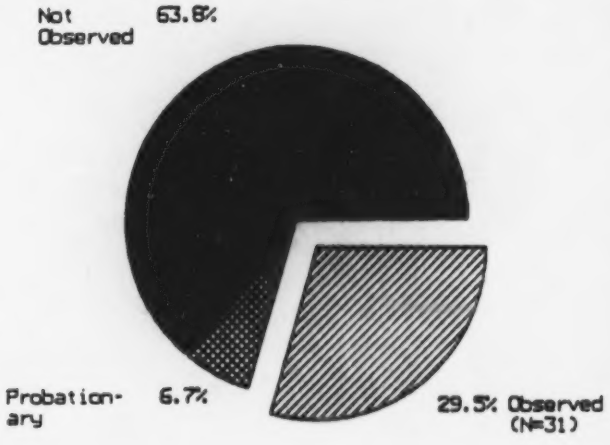


Figure 3: PERCENTAGE OF GRADE 5 TEACHERS OBSERVED

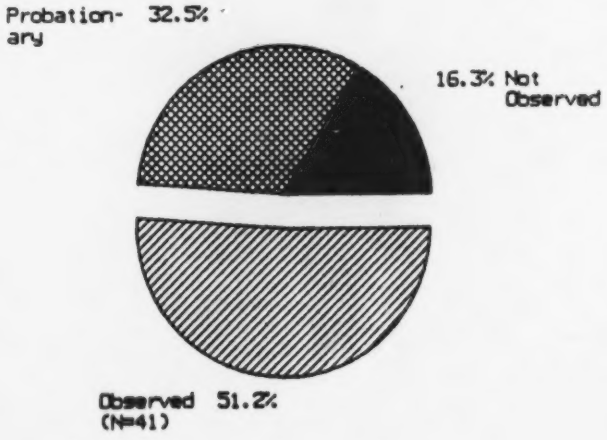
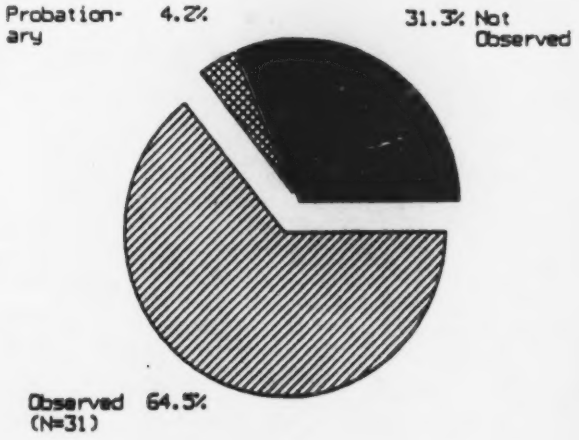


Figure 4: PERCENTAGE OF GRADE 8 TEACHERS OBSERVED



Questionnaires for Teachers

In May, questionnaires were distributed to all Core French teachers (Grades 3-8). Questionnaires were completed and returned by 112 primary and junior division teachers (65% return rate) and 37 intermediate division teachers (53% return rate). Questionnaires covered a wide range of topics including teachers' perceptions of teacher resource documents, student learning materials, program effectiveness, differences in the delivery of programs by itinerant and integrated teachers, supervision and consultative support, and professional development needs of teachers.

Questionnaires for Principals

In May, questionnaires were distributed to all elementary, middle, and junior high school principals. Questionnaires were completed and returned by 89 principals (81% return rate). In addition to a number of topics addressed in the teacher questionnaire, the questionnaire for principals addressed integration of French into the overall curriculum, timetabling, budget and staffing concerns, as well as teacher and program evaluation by principals.

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this summary chapter, the findings from all data sources are integrated and used to draw conclusions pertaining to each of the original ten review questions. Generally speaking, the findings of the review indicated that there were many areas of strength as well as areas in need of attention. Those areas identified as being in need of attention served as the starting point for the development of proposed courses of action outlined in the final chapter of this report.

In considering the findings of this review, the reader may be interested to know that the Core French Review generated considerable interest among North York staff. Eighty-seven staff, including 67 teachers, responded to an invitation to act as classroom observers. Teachers who took part in interviews were very positive about being provided with an opportunity to discuss the program and the extensive comments written by teachers on their questionnaires also suggested considerable interest in the review process and its outcomes.

Curriculum Documents and Student Learning Materials

1. **Do North York guidelines and teacher resource documents for the Core French program meet teachers' needs?**

2. **Are learning materials being used by students in the Core French program appropriate to the age, learning stage, and interests of students in the program?**

Areas of Strength

Curriculum documents. Teachers were generally satisfied with the quality of existing teacher resource documents and were particularly positive about North York curriculum guidelines; more than 50% of North York teachers (Grades 3-8) rated these guidelines as above average in quality.

Student learning materials. Teachers were very enthusiastic about the Grade 6 text (Horizons 1) which was being used frequently by almost all Grade 6 teachers and which was widely perceived as appropriate for, and appealing to, Grade 6 students. Most North York prepared supplementary materials and recommended supplementary readers for Grades 3, 4, and 5 were also rated positively by teachers with regard to their appropriateness for, and appeal to, students and were being used frequently by most teachers at the grade level to which materials had been designated.

A number of other positive findings of the review with regard to materials should also be noted. First, most classrooms which were visited as part of the review had French displays and these were usually described as colourful, varied, and tied to program objectives. Student learning materials observed to be in use in classrooms were also in keeping with recommendations outlined in North York Core French guidelines.

In addition, North York is currently developing new materials for use with exceptional students and appears to be a forerunner in this area. A number of other Boards have expressed appreciation to North York for the initiative that has been taken.

Areas in Need of Attention

Curriculum documents. Findings indicated that there are a number of curriculum documents with which a considerable number of teachers were unfamiliar. These findings may reflect a need for better orientation to the program and its resources for the many new teachers recently hired to teach Core French.

Student materials. At the primary and junior division levels, some teachers expressed concern about the appropriateness and degree of student appeal associated with the textbooks assigned to Grades 3, 4, and 5 (RSVP 1 and RSVP 2) and it was suggested that these texts, which were not being widely used, be replaced.

Primary and junior division teachers also expressed considerable concern about the amount of material which they are required to prepare for program implementation and identified a need for more ready-to-use supplementary materials (e.g. workbooks, games, hands-on resource materials). This workload concern may also be considered in the context of general workload issues associated with integrated teachers teaching more than one French class (often at more than one grade level) and itinerant teachers teaching in multiple schools (see pp.22-23).

Some of the recommended supplementary readers and materials for Grades 6, 7, and 8 received mixed ratings by teachers especially with regard to their degree of student appeal. These mixed ratings suggest that these materials are probably acceptable but not highly regarded.

At all grade levels, teachers expressed a need for more up-to-date, high quality audio-visual materials; the most common requests were for music materials in the primary and junior divisions, and films and videos in the intermediate division.

In addition, a need for more French reading materials which would have high student appeal and be appropriate to the learning stage of students was expressed by teachers at all grade levels. It was suggested by teachers and principals that additional funds be made available for the purchase of student materials.

Program Implementation Practices

3. To what extent is program implementation (i.e. program content, teaching strategies, and evaluation procedures) consistent with Ministry of Education requirements as stated in the Ministry curriculum guideline, French, Core Program 1980, the North York Core French Guideline: Part A and Part B, and with the criteria for an effective Core French program as outlined in Programming in the Primary and Junior Divisions (PPJD) (North York Board of Education, 1981)?

Areas of Strength

Program content. Observation data and follow-up interviews with teachers suggested that teachers were very familiar with the linguistic content of the curriculum and were covering this material in the recommended sequence. Specifically, structures and vocabulary topics covered during observations of Grade 5 and Grade 8 classes and lesson objectives described by teachers of these classes were found to be consistent with North York Core French guidelines.

Observation teams also recorded the amount of time devoted to each of the four language skills -- a critical facet of the program. At the Grade 5 level it was found that, as recommended in PPJD, students were primarily engaged in listening and speaking; overall, the amount of time devoted to the four skills closely approximated the Ministry of Education guideline (Figure 5). At the Grade 8 level, students were primarily engaged in listening activities; overall, the amount of time devoted to three of the four language skills (listening, reading, and writing) closely approximated the Ministry guideline (Figure 6).

The level of lesson difficulty was judged to be about right for most (80%) Grade 5 classes which were observed; students in these classes were perceived as "challenged but comfortable."

Teaching strategies. Degree of student interest in the lesson is seen as a reflection of the extent to which the program "has relevance for students and satisfies legitimate student curiosity". As can be seen in Figure 7, students appeared very interested in classroom activities in 51% of the Grade 5 classes which were observed. Observers who commented on this ideal situation noted that these classes included games and songs, and that activities were well paced and varied. In an additional 17% of Grade 5 classes, students were described as being moderately interested in classroom activities -- reflecting acceptable program practice.

These findings of considerable student interest in classroom activities at the Grade 5 level may be tied to very positive findings regarding student centred learning. Specifically, student centred learning approaches were observed in 85% of Grade 5 classes with more than one-quarter of the classes demonstrating exemplary practice (Figure 8). In these classes, observers most commonly noted that students were interacting with other

Figure 5: SKILL FOCUS FOR GRADE 5 STUDENTS: A COMPARISON WITH THE MINISTRY GUIDELINE

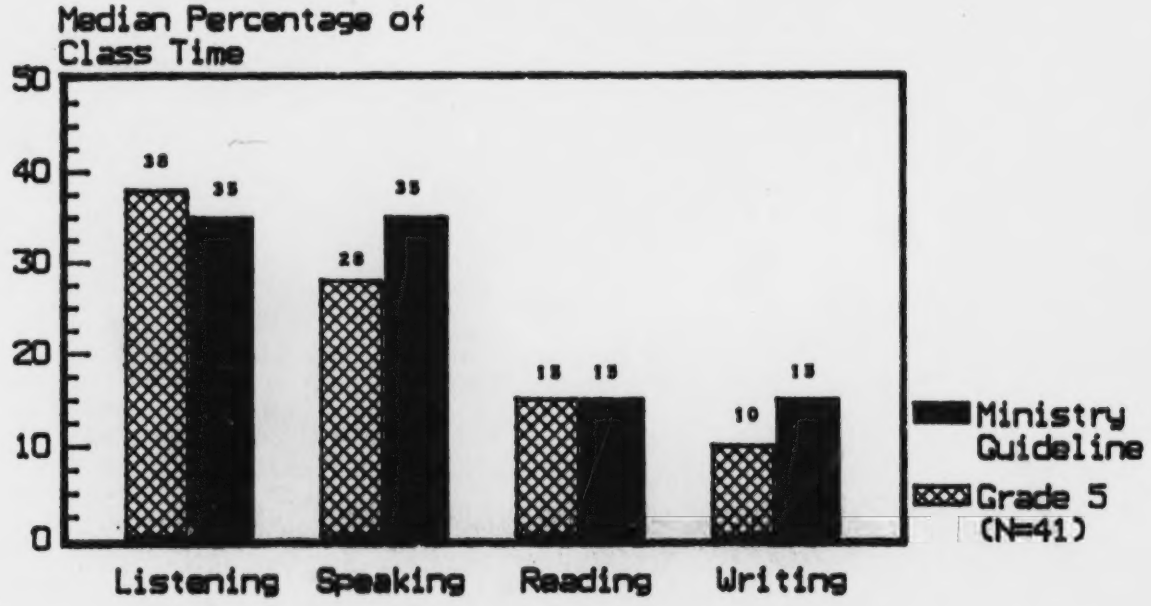


Figure 6: SKILL FOCUS FOR GRADE 8 STUDENTS: A COMPARISON WITH THE MINISTRY GUIDELINE

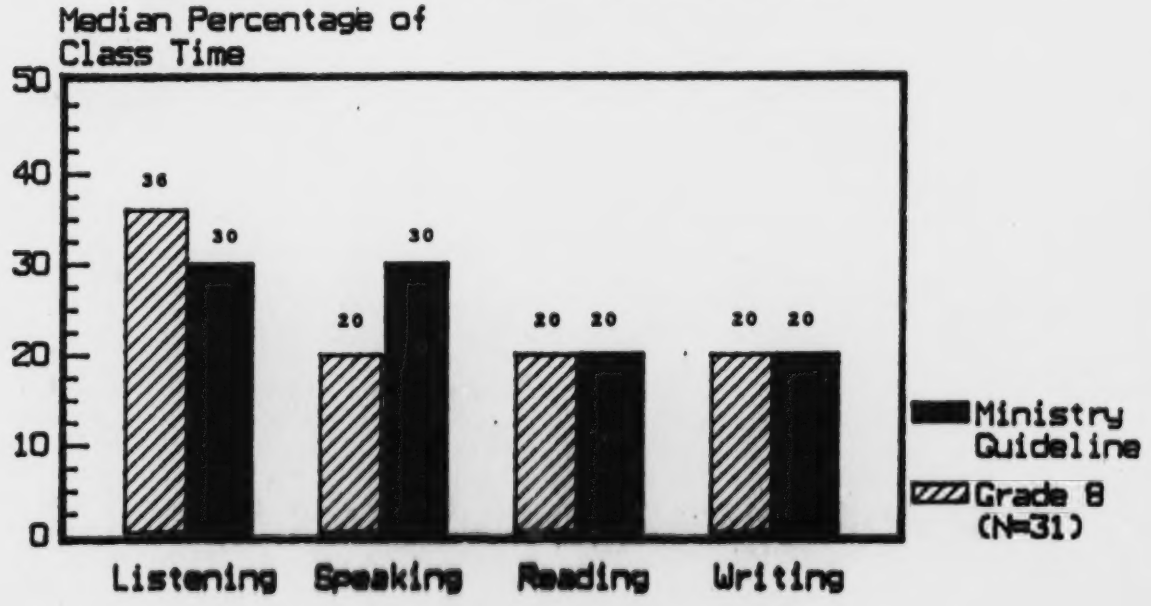


Figure 7: DEGREE OF STUDENT INTEREST IN GRADE 5 CLASSES

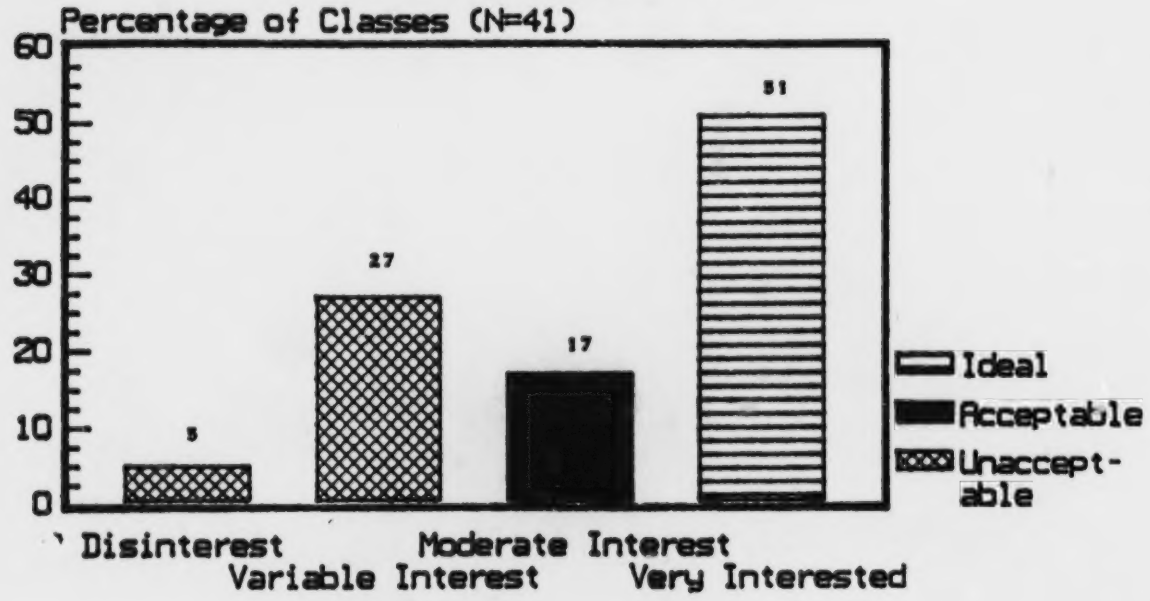
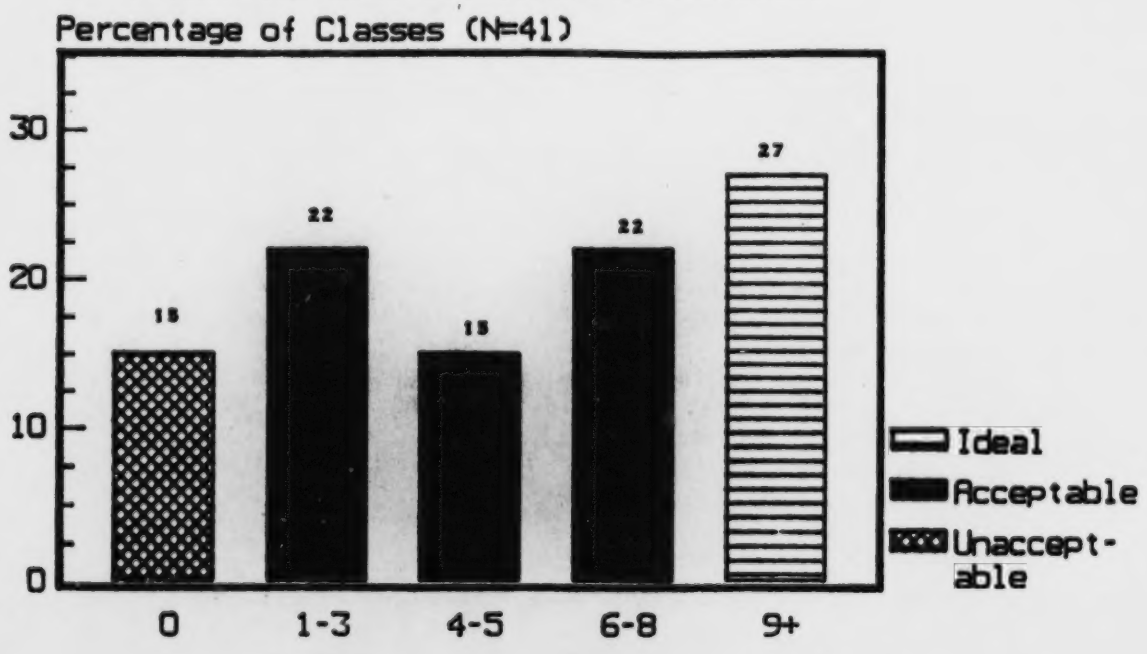


Figure 8: AMOUNT OF STUDENT CENTRED LEARNING IN GRADE 5 CLASSES



students and that teachers moved among groups, working with these groups and/or individuals. These findings are consistent with the recent emphasis being placed on this mode of program delivery across the curriculum in North York. Observers also commented on the high degree of student involvement in lessons which were described as well paced, well balanced, and success oriented.

Observation data also suggested that considerable use was being made of audio-visual technology and concrete materials, particularly at the Grade 5 level. Specifically, suitable concrete or audio-visual materials were being used in 88% of Grade 5 classes and in 65% of Grade 8 classes. Teachers' requests for more high quality audio-visual materials, described previously (p.10), may well reflect the extent to which these materials are viewed as an integral part of the Core French program by most teachers.

Evaluation. Both Grade 5 and Grade 8 teachers reported that they evaluated students at frequent intervals and used a variety of techniques including observation, teacher made-tests, assessment of daily work, and oral presentations/skits. Teachers' descriptions of how they used evaluation information were in keeping with the Ministry of Education guideline insofar as evaluation information was being used to identify the instructional needs of students and the need for program change as well as being used to arrive at a mark/grade for student report cards.

At both grade levels, teachers reported that evaluation information was provided to parents three times per year. Grade 8 teachers reported that they communicated with parents via telephone calls and in teacher-parent interviews as well as reports cards and that the focus of their reporting to parents was on student achievement/progress. A positive response to these reporting practices in the intermediate division was indicated in the interview of parents.

Areas in Need of Attention

Program content. Classroom observations pointed to a need for more time to be provided to students to develop speaking skills, especially in the intermediate division. Results from Grade 8 classroom observations indicated that insufficient time was being spent in this critical area. (See Figures 5 & 6.)

Observation findings in Grades 5 and 8 also suggested that cultural content was not being included in most lessons and that the integration of other curriculum content into the French lesson was limited. Although about two-thirds of teachers reported that they do address cultural objectives as part of the program, most often in the form of Carnival/holiday activities or audio-visual presentations, the inclusion of cultural content appears to constitute an occasional occurrence. A lack of cultural materials was cited by some teachers as one reason for the lack of cultural program content.

A need to examine the difficulty level of program content at the Grade 8 level was indicated. Forty-two percent of Grade 8 classes were viewed by observers as being either too difficult (23%) or too easy (19%) for students. However, it was noted that structuring a lesson of appropriate difficulty at Grade 8 appears problematic in at least some cases due to the wide range of student ability within classes.

In addition, although both Ministry and North York objectives are stated in communicative terms, follow-up interviews with teachers suggested that teachers may not be fully cognizant of these objectives. Specifically, most Grade 5 and 8 teachers did not describe lesson objectives in communicative terms.

Teaching strategies. Classroom observation data indicated that teachers were using English far more than is considered necessary or appropriate (Figures 9 and 10). English was also being used by students for a wide variety of purposes during French class time. This is considered to be a critical area for attention, especially given the research which has suggested that minimizing the use of English in the FSL classroom, or maximizing the use of French, is closely tied to program success (Carroll, 1975*).

Observation data also suggested that insufficient use was being made of grouping strategies in program delivery. This was particularly evident at the Grade 8 level where 48% of all classes observed were conducted as a whole class; 34% of Grade 5 classes were limited to whole class activities. Insufficient use of grouping strategies may also be tied to findings that suggest that formal language teaching approaches are currently receiving too much emphasis. Specifically, in 42% of Grade 8 classes, all or almost all of the lesson involved formal language practice such as drills, memorized dialogues, etc. The emphasis on formal language practice was particularly notable in the area of speaking; in more than 50% of classes which were observed, Grade 5 and Grade 8 students' use of spoken French was limited to drill type activities.

The above findings were consistent with observation data that pointed to variable levels of student interest in Grade 8 classes and minimal use of student centred learning activities in Grade 8. Specifically, student interest was described as variable in about two-thirds of the classes observed, and in one-third of Grade 8 classes no indicators of student centred learning were observed. Some observers suggested that lack of student interest was associated with lessons that were either too difficult, too slowly paced, or which involved a great deal of formal activity. Student interest in Grade 8 classes was associated with the use of group activities, dialogues, games, visual/concrete materials, personalized questions, and written work.

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* Carroll, J.B. The Teaching of French as a Foreign Language in Eight Countries. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975.

Figure 9: FREQUENCY OF TEACHER USE OF ENGLISH IN GRADE 5 CLASSES

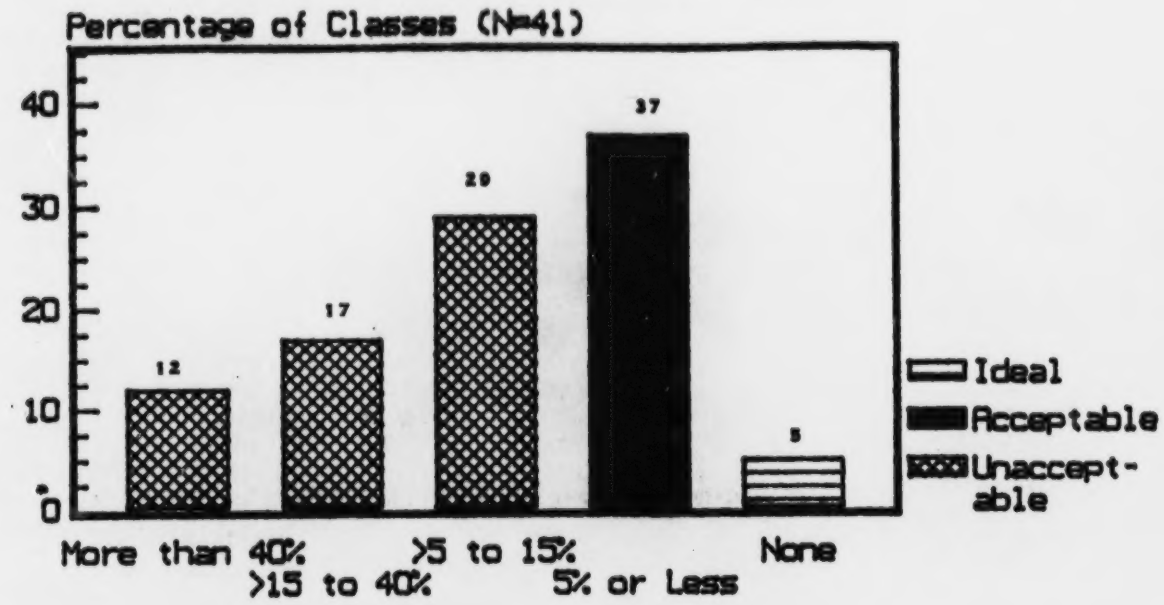
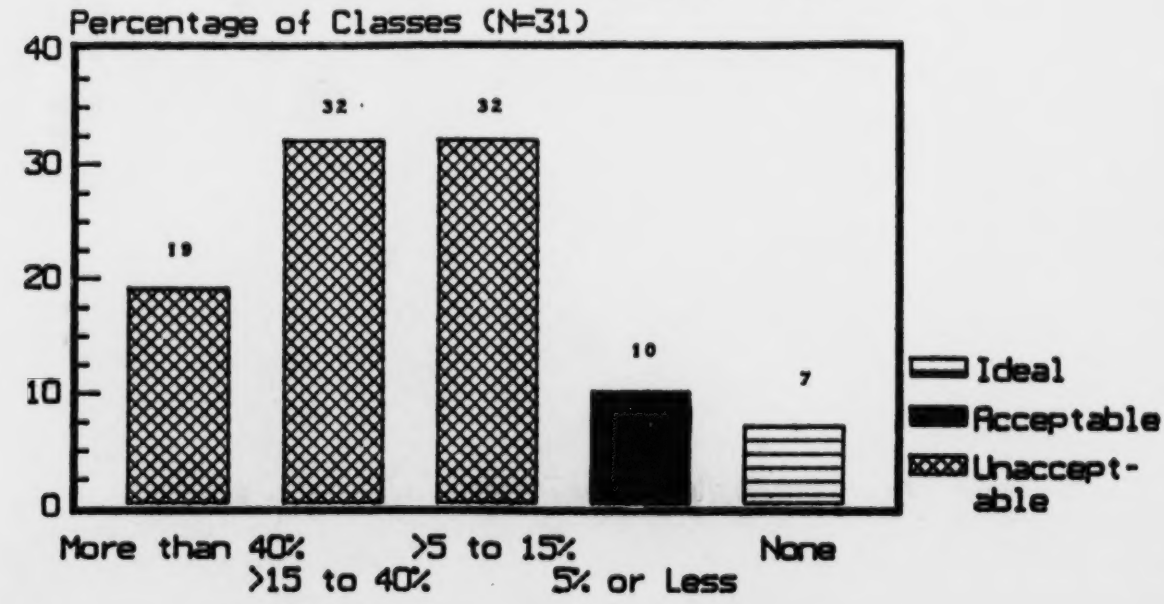


Figure 10: FREQUENCY OF TEACHER USE OF ENGLISH IN GRADE 8 CLASSES



Classroom observation data also indicated that insufficient use was being made of human resources at both Grade 5 and Grade 8. At Grade 5, no French speaking resource people were used in any of the 41 classes observed. At the Grade 8 level, only one out of 31 classes included an additional human resource--a French speaking Grade 12 student who worked with individuals and small groups on a daily basis. This ideal practice, of including a French speaking resource person in the lesson, is considered of considerable value not only in terms of the direct assistance which such individuals can provide to students but also because of the value in exposing students to other French speaking people and broadening students' cultural awareness.

Another area in need of some attention is the provision of problem solving activities for students. Findings indicated that in 42% of Grade 5 classes and 74% of Grade 8 classes less than five minutes of the lesson was devoted to problem solving in French.

Evaluation. While observers noted an acceptable balance of classroom activities among the four skill areas, it was unclear from teachers' interview comments as to whether a similar balance existed in terms of student evaluation. The issue of student evaluation may well require emphasis in future curriculum development and implementation.

The need for improved methods of reporting student achievement at the Grade 5 level was suggested. At this grade level, teachers reported that the principal means of communicating evaluation information was report cards. In addition, parents who were interviewed indicated that insufficient evaluation information was being provided at the elementary school level.

Additional Issues

Program organization and administration. A number of concerns were raised by teachers, principals, and parents during the course of the review pertaining to general program organization and administration. Although these aspects of the program were not originally identified as foci of the review, they nonetheless merit consideration.

The appropriateness of integrating exceptional students into Core French classes was questioned by a number of principals and teachers, especially in the intermediate division. The number of exceptional students enrolled in the Grade 5 and Grade 8 classes observed in this study averaged 4.5 and 4.4 respectively (based on teacher reports). While about one-third of the teachers who were interviewed described these students as fitting into the program well, the remainder indicated that students were misplaced in the regular Core French class or that the situation was variable depending on the particular student or the work being covered. Almost all teachers who were interviewed acknowledged that different strategies were required to teach these students, including modifying/individualizing the program.

Contrasting results of the Grade 8 Listening Comprehension Test for regular students with results of exceptional students, findings indicated that gifted students (N=17) performed consistently better than regular students (N=673), whereas other exceptional students (N=70; primarily learning disabled) performed consistently poorer (gifted students: average score = 95%; regular students: average score = 77%; primarily learning disabled: average score = 60%).

With regard to the integration of the English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Second Dialect (ESD) student, a number of teachers agreed that integration in the primary division can be a very positive experience. The ESL/ESD student is at this stage on an equal footing with his/her English speaking counterpart, insofar as both students are being introduced to the French language for the first time. On the other hand, concerns were expressed about the intermediate division student who enters the Core French program without any French background. The number of ESL/ESD students enrolled in the Grade 5 and Grade 8 classes observed in the study averaged 2.9 and 2.4 respectively (based on teacher reports). Most of the teachers who commented in interview on the way in which these students fit into the program were positive; about one-third were negative. Approximately three out of four teachers agreed that different strategies were required in teaching these students.

The 40 ESL students who completed the Grade 8 Listening Comprehension Test achieved a level of performance similar to that of regular students, whereas the eight ESD students performed consistently poorer (ESD students: average score = 55%; ESL students: average score = 71%; regular students: average score = 77%). In interpreting these findings, the reader should be aware that ESL/ESD students with less than two years of French were, at the discretion of their teacher, exempt from completing the test. While one may be reluctant to draw conclusions based on the small ESD sample size, the achievement data does suggest that ESL students who begin French in Grade 6 or earlier, achieve by Grade 8 a level of performance similar to that of regular students who begin their study of French in Grade 4. No information is available on ESL/ESD students who are integrated into French classes for the first time in Grade 7 or Grade 8.

The concerns of some intermediate division teachers about the appropriateness of integrating exceptional and ESL/D students into the Core French class may also be considered in the context of concerns about large class size and an expressed need for more assistance in the form of French speaking teaching assistants on the part of intermediate division teachers.

Another area of concern identified during the course of the review was the use of combined-grade classes for Core French in the primary and junior divisions. Concerns about combined-grade classes were raised by both teachers and principals. These concerns focused on possible detrimental effects on the quality of the program, difficulties of simultaneously offering two programs which are intended to be largely oral, and predicted timetabling problems.

4. How do Core French program implementation procedures in North York compare with procedures being used by other large central Ontario Boards of Education?

In comparing North York Core French program implementation procedures with those being used by four other large central Ontario Boards of Education, areas of similarities and differences were noted as well as approaches which varied across all Boards.

Similarities with Other Boards

Workload guidelines. As is the case in North York, all four Boards surveyed indicated that the amount of teaching time allocated to each teacher is determined by the supervising principals. None of the Boards surveyed had developed teacher workload guidelines.

Consultative assistance. It is difficult to compare the ratio of consultative staff to students among all Boards because only Core French enrolment figures were available from the four Boards interviewed and consultative staff typically also provide service to immersion, extended, and secondary school French programs. However, recognizing the limitations of the data, the number of professional French administrative/consultative staff in North York (1 co-ordinator, 1 assistant co-ordinator, 1 consultant and 2.5 program leaders) appears to be generally comparable to the number of professional staff available in most other Boards. The North York ratio is 1 per 3,300 Core French students (JK-8) as compared with a range of 1 per 3,700 to 1 per 4,200 at three other Boards.

Combined-grade levels. While North York had very few combined-grade classes in 1987-88, the number of combined-grade classes has increased considerably for 1988-89. Due to this recent shift, the four Boards originally surveyed in March 1988 were re-contacted in September 1988 to obtain more up-to-date information. While exact figures were not available, indications were that all Boards have experienced an increase in the number of combined-grade classes for 1988-89.

All those interviewed agreed that combining students in their initial year with second year students should be avoided; there was some disagreement about the effects of combined grades at higher levels.

On-going teacher and program evaluation. As is the case in North York, all four Boards surveyed indicated that both teacher and program evaluation are essentially the responsibility of the principals and local assistant superintendents, neither of whom is usually qualified in FSL.

Support for out-of-class communicative activities. The importance of out-of-class communicative activities by Boards of Education appears to be acknowledged insofar as all Boards surveyed indicated that frequent consistent support is provided for these activities. This is generally consistent with North York philosophy and with recent support provided to North York staff for out-of-class communicative activities.

Language background of Core French teachers. While only two Boards were able to indicate what percentage of their Core French teachers were native speakers of French, these statistics, ranging from 2% to 10%, are consistent with North York statistics which are usually 8-10%.

Differences from Other Boards

Initial year/time allotment. North York is the only Board which begins French at Grade 3 and which offers 20 minute programs in Grades 3 and 4. Three of the four Boards surveyed begin French in Grade 4 and offer 40 minute programs beginning in that grade. The remaining Board offers 40 minute programs beginning in Grade 1.

Materials for exceptional students. As indicated in the discussion of materials, North York is the only Board producing resource material designed specifically to assist Core French teachers to modify their programs for exceptional students. North York's leadership in this area was gratefully acknowledged by two of the respondents from other Boards.

Formal program review. North York is one of the few Boards to have carried out a review of its Core French program. Only one of the four Boards surveyed had conducted a formal program review; this Board reported that the review had influenced program development to a significant extent.

In considering future program evaluation needs, most respondents favoured the development of some standardized tests, particularly at the secondary school level.

Variations among Boards

Use of integrated and itinerant teachers. North York has recently stated its preference for using integrated French teachers for delivery of its Core French program and has begun to implement this new direction by hiring new teachers with French qualifications and reassigning itinerant teachers to new positions. This new direction is consistent with preferences of two other Boards for using integrated teachers; two Boards prefer the use of itinerant teachers teaching in one school only.

As is currently the case in North York where approximately 25% of Core French classes are being taught by homeroom teachers, the majority of elementary school students in three of the four Boards surveyed do not receive French instruction from their own classroom teacher.

Instructional material/textbooks. At the elementary level, North York uses commercially-produced materials which are supplemented **to a considerable extent** by Board-produced material. This model was being used by one of the four Boards surveyed. Of the three remaining Boards, two were using commercially-produced materials which were supplemented **occasionally** by Board-produced materials. The remaining Board used Board-produced materials which were occasionally supplemented by commercially-produced materials.

Staffing

5. **Are adequate consultative support, supervision, and direction (from consultative staff, principals, supervisory officers, conveners, etc.) available to Core French teachers?**

6. **What differences, if any, exist between programs being delivered by integrated teachers and programs being delivered by itinerant teachers?**

7. **What are the language skills of FSL teachers in the Core French program?**

Areas of Strength

Consultative/supervisory support. Approximately two-thirds of primary and junior division teachers and approximately three-quarters of intermediate division teachers indicated that they received considerable or a great deal of support from at least one source. At the primary and junior division levels, the source of assistance or direction was usually the program leader for French (in 46% of cases). At the intermediate level, the French chairperson, subject representative, or convener was most often reported as providing considerable or a great deal of assistance (in 49% of cases); Modern Languages staff were perceived as providing at least some assistance by about three-quarters of intermediate division teachers. A high degree of satisfaction with the quality of support available from these sources as well as the quality of support available from principals was expressed by teachers. In interview, principals also praised the quality of support available from program leaders.

Use of integrated and itinerant teachers. While no significant differences in teaching strategies or major program content were observed in classes being taught by integrated and itinerant teachers, the perceptions of teachers and principals suggested that there were advantages associated with each teaching approach. Positive aspects of the integrated approach to teaching Core French included greater opportunity to provide students with extra help in French outside of regularly scheduled class time, the opportunity to integrate French into other areas of the curriculum (in instances where the integrated teacher teaches French to his/her own class), and integrated teachers being an integral part of a school's staff. On the other hand, itinerant teachers, as specialists in their subject area, were perceived by teachers as having more opportunity to develop a wide variety of high quality materials for use with their students. Itinerant teachers also rated their facility in French higher than did integrated teachers and had more teaching experience than integrated teachers. While itinerant teachers rated the progress of their students as greater in the areas of reading, writing, and culture than did integrated teachers, classroom observation data showed no significant differences in the amount of time devoted by these two groups of teachers to these content areas.

Areas in Need of Attention

Consultative/supervisory support. Primary and junior division level conveners are reported by most (72%) Core French teachers to be providing them with little or no assistance; opinion about the quality of the support tended to be mixed. While no data are available to account for these findings, it is not unlikely that the number of primary and junior division conveners with an FSL background is small.

The need to assist principals in conducting teacher and program evaluations was indicated. At present, close to one-third of teachers are dissatisfied with procedures being used to evaluate them or are simply not being evaluated. While the problem of little or no evaluation taking place was noted most often, concerns were also expressed by teachers about the qualification of evaluators and the thoroughness of evaluation procedures; in addition, intermediate division teachers perceived expectations for teacher performance to be unrealistic given the context of multi-level groups and large class size. About one-quarter of principals expressed dissatisfaction with teacher evaluation procedures and indicated that they felt hampered by their lack of French and would favour workshops on effective evaluation techniques.

A small number of teachers indicated that school administrators have a negative or indifferent attitude toward the program and view French as a low priority. Although a similar concern was expressed by parents who were interviewed, most principals (87%) who were surveyed indicated that they perceived the teaching of French to be important; over 70% of principals also indicated that they believed that other school administrators and supervisory officers perceived the teaching of French to be important.

Use of integrated and itinerant teachers. A considerable number of programming concerns as well as emotional/personal concerns were raised by both integrated and itinerant teachers. These concerns related to the new Board direction of having integrated teachers teaching French to other classes in the school as well as their own class and phasing out the use of itinerant teachers. A number of these concerns, listed below, were also shared by principals.

- The workload of integrated teachers is very heavy and integrated teachers feel that they do not have sufficient time to devote to the program. (Most integrated teachers were teaching one or more classes of French in their school in addition to their own class and many were teaching French at more than one grade level.)

- Assigning integrated teachers to teach multiple classes of French negates the concept of integration, results in the "segregation" of another subject, and creates timetabling problems for principals.

- Coverage for integrated teachers teaching another French class was not always perceived as adequate nor were workload "trades" always fair or easy to negotiate.

- A number of integrated teachers resent being "locked in" to teaching French.

. The increased use of integrated teachers has resulted in itinerant teachers teaching in multiple schools. This is viewed negatively by teachers because of the increased workload and by both teachers and principals because of its adverse effect on job performance, timetabling problems, and itinerant teachers' ability to become an integral part of a school's staff. The perception among most teachers that itinerant teachers are not usually able to provide students with extra help in French outside of regularly scheduled class time may also be related to this issue.

Figures 11, 12, and 13 summarize the perceptions of teachers and principals regarding the effectiveness of five different approaches to teaching Core French. The approaches which were most commonly perceived to be effective by teachers and principals were:

a) assigning integrated teachers to teach French to their own class only

b) assigning itinerant teachers to teach for a full day in one school only.

While most itinerant teachers perceived teaching French for a half day in one school as an effective approach, this approach was less attractive to some principals than a full day itinerant teacher.

The least effective approaches for teaching Core French were perceived by both teachers and principals as a) assigning integrated teachers to teach French to one or more classes in their school as well as their own class and b) assigning itinerant teachers to teach for less than half a day in a school.

Figure 11: INTEGRATED TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT TEACHING APPROACHES FOR CORE FRENCH

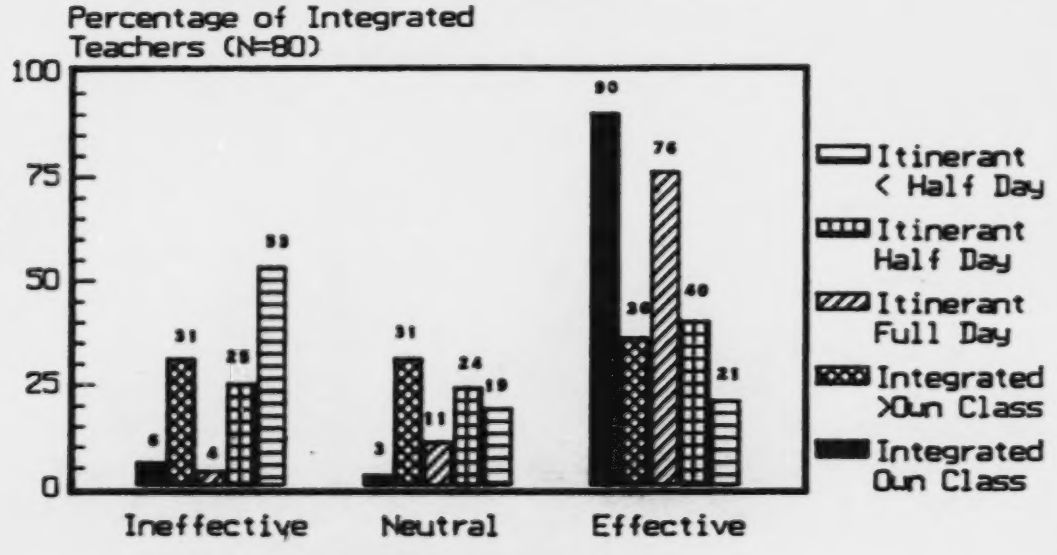


Figure 12: ITINERANT TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT TEACHING APPROACHES FOR CORE FRENCH

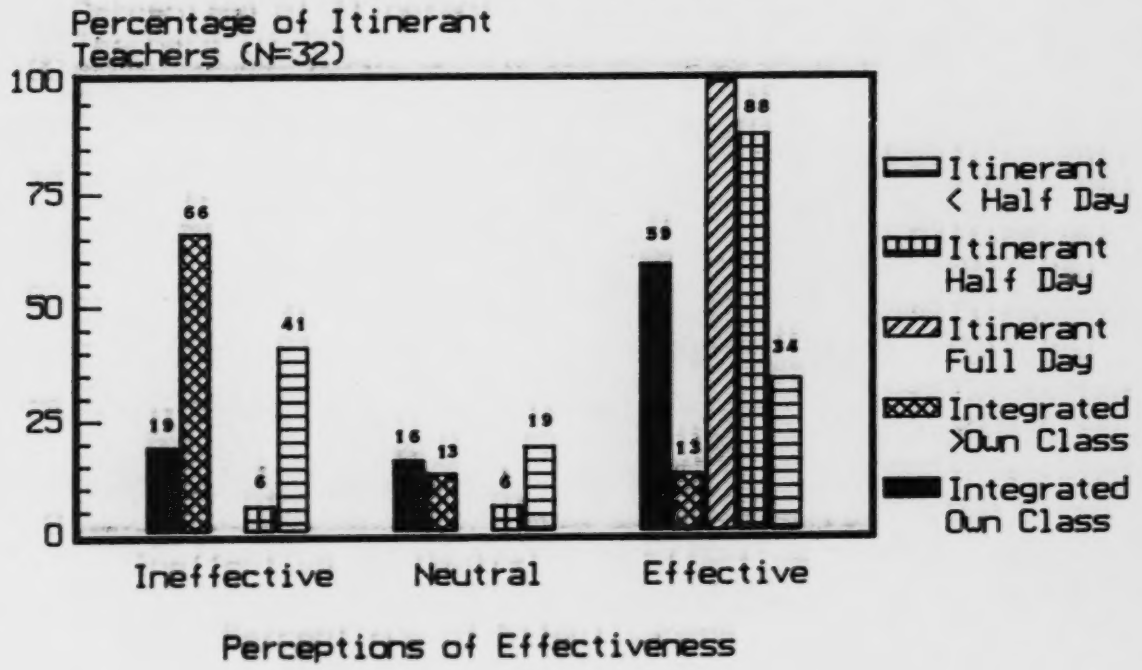
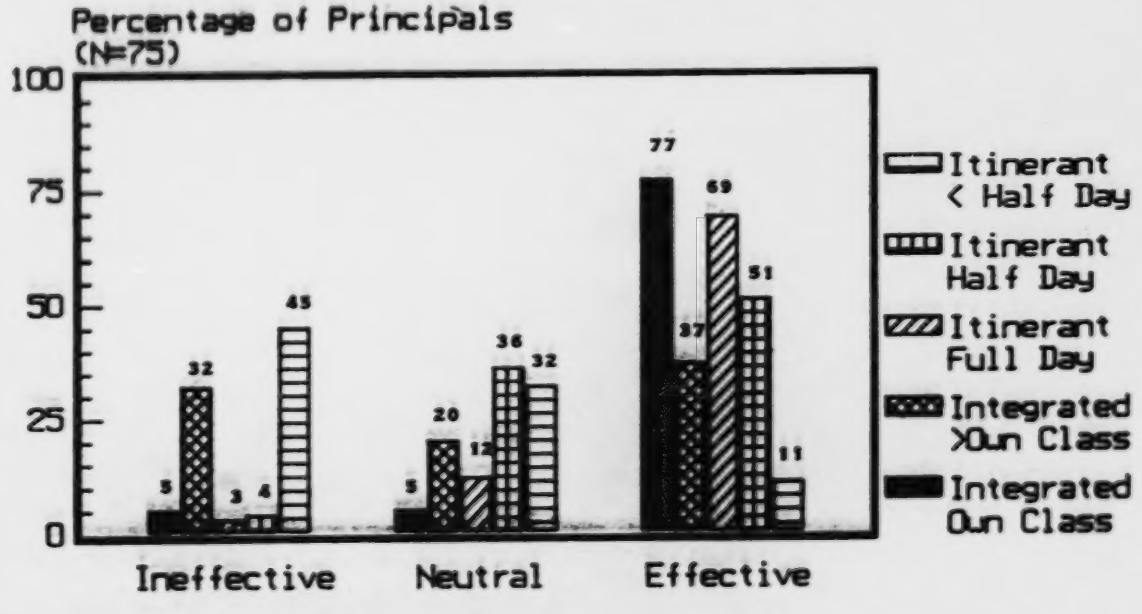


Figure 13: PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT TEACHING APPROACHES FOR CORE FRENCH



Language skills of Core French teachers. The oral language skills of 23 Core French teachers were assessed by external observers working together with North York staff. While the number of errors made in the area of pronunciation and intonation were in the acceptable range for all 23 teachers, approximately one in five teachers were observed to have made three to five errors in structures/grammar; three teachers made three to five errors in vocabulary. These numbers of errors were considered unacceptable. While teachers self-ratings were somewhat more positive (approximately 96% of teachers rated their four language skills as adequate or better), it may be concluded from overall findings that the language skills of some teachers are not up to standard, and that control of structures/grammar may prove to be a particular area of concern. This conclusion is generally consistent with a number of requests made by teachers during the course of the review for language maintenance courses/opportunities.

Supply teachers. A lack of qualified supply teachers for Core French was an additional area of concern noted by principals, teachers, and parents. This problem appears to result in students not always receiving French instruction in the absence of the designated French teacher.

Parental Perceptions of the Core French Program

8. What are parental perceptions of the Core French program?

Data regarding parental perceptions of the Core French program are derived from principals' responses to a questionnaire and a group interview with six interested/concerned parents. While interview findings of this small group are a valid source of data, results are not necessarily representative of parental perceptions in the larger community and must therefore be treated cautiously.

Areas of Strength

From the perspective of principals, parental response to the Core French program has generally been positive (63% of principals reported a positive response) or neutral (32%). Only one principal (from a sample of 89) reported a negative reaction on the part of parents.

Parents themselves were reluctant to comment on the program's strengths or weaknesses because they perceived program success to be tied to the strength of the individual teacher. However, as indicated previously, they did express satisfaction with the way in which student progress was reported at the middle school/junior high level.

Areas in Need of Attention

Parents did not perceive themselves to be very well-informed about the Core French program and expressed an interest in receiving more information about program aims, content, and what role they as parents can play in their child's French education. Principals recommended that a synopsis of the French program at each grade level be made available to parents. In addition, as indicated previously, parents expressed a need for more detailed reporting of student progress at the elementary school level.

While recognizing that there are large variations among schools, parents were of the opinion that principals and teachers perceive French to be less important than other subjects. As indicated previously, principals' questionnaire responses did not support this viewpoint insofar as 87% of principals reported that they perceived the teaching of French to be important.

Parents expressed concerns about the accessibility of teachers, the consistency of standards among schools, and timetabling. They also expressed an interest in lowering class size, increasing the length of the 20 minute French period, and obtaining a pool of qualified supply teachers to relieve Core French teachers for out-of-school activities.

Comments on Staffing

While recognizing some advantages to the use of integrated teachers, parents favoured the use of itinerant teachers who were perceived as more highly qualified than integrated teachers.

Program Outcomes

9. To what extent are the stated goals, aims, and objectives of the Core French program, as outlined in North York curriculum guidelines, being achieved by students?

Areas of Strength

Results of the Grade 8 French Listening Comprehension Test indicated that student progress in **listening** was on target -- i.e., that program objectives pertaining to the aim of providing opportunities to enable students to listen to and understand ideas and concepts expressed in French, were being achieved. Specifically, the mean percentage of correct responses on this test was 76% which falls in the system target range of 74% to 82%. Test findings were also consistent with teachers' perceptions that student progress in developing listening skills was generally average or above in Grades 3 to 8.

Teacher perceptions of student progress in **reading** (i.e., learning to read with the speed and level of comprehension appropriate to their individual stage of development), **writing** (i.e., learning to write with ease and an acceptable degree of correctness), and the development of **learning skills pertinent to language study** indicated that program objectives were also being achieved in these areas for students in Grades 3 to 8. Eighty percent or more of teachers rated student progress in these areas as average or above.

Student achievement findings were consistent with program implementation data which indicated that the amount of time devoted to listening, reading, and writing at Grade 5 (junior division) and Grade 8 (intermediate division) was in keeping with the Ministry guideline.

Areas in Need of Attention

Teacher perceptions of student progress in the areas of **speaking** (i.e., learning to express orally their experiences, thoughts and feelings with clarity and confidence), and **culture** (i.e., becoming familiar with the customs, geography, history, institutions, traditions, and arts of French Canada and other French-speaking regions of the world and developing a sensitivity to other cultures and peoples and a critical awareness of their own culture) indicated that program objectives were not being achieved in these areas for Grade 3-8 students. Specifically, the percentage of teachers who rated the progress of their students in speaking as poor was over 25% and percentages tended to increase from the primary to the intermediate division (Grades 3-4: 27%; Grades 5-6: 32%; Grades 7-8: 38%). Again, these findings were consistent with classroom observation findings that insufficient time was being devoted to speaking activities at the Grade 8 level and that cultural content was not being included in most lessons at both Grade 5 and Grade 8.

Professional Development Needs

10. What are the professional development needs of teachers in the Core French program?

In responding to a questionnaire which listed ten possible topics for professional development, 70% or more of Core French teachers indicated that they would like at least "some" training in nine of the ten areas. The four areas in which 50% or more of teachers indicated that they would like to receive "considerable" or "a great deal" of training were:

Topic	Division
a) developing supplementary materials for students with special needs	primary, junior, and intermediate

Topic (Cont'd.)	Division (Cont'd.)
b) student centred learning	primary, junior, and intermediate
c) implementation of new Core French curriculum	primary and junior
d) French activities (games, songs, etc.)	primary and junior

Based on data from other sources, including teacher comments in interview and classroom observation data, the following topics/procedures may also be considered in planning future teacher in-services or professional development sessions.

Topic	Division
a) clarification of exemplary classroom practices and program implementation procedures including: . use of French by teachers (or strategies for minimizing the use of English in the FSL classroom) . provision of French speaking opportunities for students . communicative language teaching approaches . grouping strategies, particularly at the intermediate level . problem solving activities in French	primary, junior, and intermediate
b) upgrading of teachers' French language skills	primary, junior, and intermediate
c) addressing cultural objectives in the Core French program	primary, junior, and intermediate
d) methods/approaches for teaching combined-grade classes	primary and junior

Ideally, teachers expressed a preference for attending workshops on a professional activity day (92%) or during regular school hours (89%). It was noted that while full day professional development sessions have in the past been made available to itinerant teachers, integrated teachers feel that they have not had equal access to professional development during school time. While some teachers indicated that they would be willing to attend workshops after school (50% of primary and junior division teachers; 54% of intermediate division teachers), relatively few teachers were willing to attend sessions in the summer (35% or fewer), in the evening (30% or fewer), or on a weekend (14% or fewer).

Follow-up Plans

As a preliminary step in addressing the findings of this review, the Core French Review Steering Committee has developed a proposal which is intended to serve as the starting point for the development of a detailed action plan. The proposal documents courses of action pertaining to four major areas:

- Curriculum Documents and Provision of Learning Materials
- Improving Program Delivery
- Professional Development for Teachers of Core French
- Resources Needed to Staff the Program

It is anticipated that aspects of the action plan will begin to be implemented in the 1988-89 academic year and will focus on areas of the Core French program in need of attention. However, it should be emphasized that many areas of strength were identified during the course of the review which also should be maintained and supported over the coming years.